

THE TWO PILLARS OF SALVATION

NO. 2357

A SERMON
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*"We believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead;
who was delivered for our offenses, and was raised again for our justification."
Romans 4:24-25*

FAITH—true, saving faith—is in all ages the same. It may exercise itself upon different things, but yet the faith of Abraham is the same faith as that which was in the heart of Paul, and the faith of Paul was precisely the same faith as that which is in the heart of every believer at the present moment. We have "like precious faith" with the godly of all the ages, it is always the same faith as it is always the same God and the same Savior.

Paul shows us in this chapter, that there is a remarkable likeness between the faith of the believer now and the faith of Abraham. Abraham's faith went this length, he believed in God as able even to quicken the dead, and that is precisely what we also believe.

He believed that he himself, when he was more than a hundred years old, with his wife equally advanced in age, could be so quickened by the power of God that they should be the parents of a seed which God had promised, and although Sarah once laughed, and I should imagine that Abraham sometimes had his fainting fits, yet they persevered in the solemn conviction that it should be even as the Lord had promised, and the day came when Sarah laughed in another sense, for a child was born to her, whose name was called "Isaac," that is "Laughter," because of the joy with which he filled his parents' hearts and home.

Thus you see, Abraham believed that God could quicken the dead, he himself and his wife, being as though they were dead as to all possibility that, in the ordinary course of nature, an heir should be born to them.

Further on in the patriarch's history, God tried his faith again. He bade him go, and take his son, his only son, whom he loved, and offer him up as a sacrifice on Mount Moriah. Abraham only wished to know what God commanded, and he was prompt in obeying. It was not for him to reason why, or make reply, it was for him to obey, so he went his three days' journey, his much loved son bearing the wood for the sacrifice. They went to the top of the mount, and Abraham drew his knife to slay his son. His hand was divinely stopped in due time, and a ram was offered in the place of Isaac.

One reason why Abraham was able to give this crowning proof of obedience was that he was sure that God would keep His promise, and that even if his son must die, God would raise him from the dead. This seems to have been the point to which his faith always came, that God could raise the dead, that He could work what men call impossibilities, that what was not within the range of human nature was quite easy to that eternal arm to whose power there is no limit.

Now, beloved, this is one of the articles of our Christian faith, to believe that God can raise the dead. You and I believe, if we are true believers, that God brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep. We believe that Jesus assuredly died, and that He was buried in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea, but that on the third day He rose, again, and quitted the tomb, no more to die. This we most firmly believe to be a matter of fact, not a fiction, or a piece of poetry, but a matter of fact, like any other reliable history, and we accept it without question.

We also believe that we too, though we may die, shall live again, and that, although worms may devour this body, yet in our flesh we shall see God. At the sound of the archangel's trumpet, the dead in Christ shall rise, and all the dead from land or sea shall gather before the great white throne. However scattered the particles of their bodies may have been, in ten thousand devious ways, it matters not, the body that was sown in weakness shall be raised in power, that which was sown a corruptible body shall be raised in incorruption. This we unfeignedly believe, and our faith also believes that even now, as to spiritual things, though by nature we are dead to the things of God, yet He can raise the dead.

When we feel heavy and dull, and the music of our worship drags wearily, we believe that God can quicken us, and though we know many who are this day without spiritual life, and far from God by wicked works, we go and speak to them the everlasting Gospel with the full persuasion that God can raise the dead, even those who are dead in trespasses and sins. Though they were dead, yet shall they live. We believe this and rejoice in it.

Thus I think I have shown you that the faith of Abraham is a fair specimen of the faith of all believers and in this way he is the father of all believers, and all the children bear a family likeness. In each case they have faith in Him who can quicken the dead.

Now let us come to our text, and I will handle it briefly with the intense desire, that if anybody wants to find the way of salvation, he may find it tonight. True faith is of this character, "We believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead, who was delivered for our offenses, and was raised again for our justification."

I. First, OUR FAITH LOOKS TO GOD THE FATHER IN THE MATTER OF SALVATION.

We do not alone look to Jesus Christ, as some say that we do, but "we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead," not on "Jesus, our Lord" alone. We do believe on Him, but we also equally believe on God that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead.

On this point there is an erroneous faith in two ways, and one is sorry to see either form of this error, since it mars the beauty of divine truth. Some overlook the Father. They speak of Jesus as though we were indebted to Him, and to Him only, for our salvation. We are immeasurably indebted to Him, blessed be His name! But Jesus does not save without the Father, or apart from the Father, or against the Father's will.

I like the expression that is used in the book of Genesis concerning Abraham and his son when they were going to the mount of sacrifice, it is written, "They went both of them together," and in the great sacrifice that was made for human sin, I may say of the Divine Father and His equally Divine Son, "They went both of them together."

There was a secret agreement and concurrence between the Father and the Son concerning our redemption, and the Father has our love and gratitude even as the Son has. Jesus gave Himself for us, but the Father gave Jesus, His other self! Jesus says, "I and my Father are one." I might say, in a certain sense, that it was God the Father who suffered for us, for He gave His Son, whom He loved, to suffer on our behalf, He gave up the darling of His heart, and in the person of His Son, He became our Savior.

It is, "God our Savior" as well as "Jesus Christ our Savior." Never dissociate the Father from the Son in the work of redemption, Jesus did not come into this world to die to make His Father gracious. No, the covenant of grace was made from eternity, and Jesus came to fulfill a stipulation of the covenant through which it behooved Him to suffer.

The Father's love is from everlasting, and the death of Jesus is one of the streams that flow from that eternal fountain. The Father is to be praised, for He delivered up His Son, and raised His Son again from the dead, and we must never forget the grace which He has in this way manifested for our salvation. Therefore, let us never fall into the error of those who overlook the Father's part in our redemption.

It is an equally pernicious error if we overlook the Son. Oh, how many talk about God, and pray to God, and speak of God's mercy, but what have they to do with God if they ignore or despise His Son? God will not hear you, He will not answer your prayers if you do not come to Him by Jesus Christ.

There is but one way of coming to the Father, and that is through His Son, Jesus Christ, and you cannot approach God without the one Mediator between God and men.

Why did He ordain a Mediator, and why did that Mediator shed His blood, if you and I can come to God without His propitiatory sacrifice? No, beloved, we believe on Jesus Christ as well as the Father. We believe on the Father, but we believe on Him as the God that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead.

It is not the Father without the Son who saves, nor the Son without the Father, nor these two without the divine and ever-to-be-blessed Holy Spirit. It needs the whole Trinity to make a Christian, and the whole Trinity, co-operating in a Divine Unity, must be praised and adored for our salvation.

But now, what does the text say in bidding us trust to God the Father in our salvation? Well, it says first, that *He delivered up His Son*. Of Jesus, we here read, “who was delivered for our offenses.” We know who it was that delivered Him, for we have in this same epistle the text, “He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?”

It was the Father who delivered His Son to be arrayed in human flesh, it was the Father who delivered His Son to be despised and rejected of men, it was the Father who delivered up His Son to the traitor’s kiss, and to the cruel handling of the Roman soldiers, it was the Father who delivered up His Son to the scourge, and then to the cross, and to the bitterness of death itself. The Father gave up His Son to die for sinners. This was the supreme proof of the Father’s love to us.

And then next, we are told that, in due season, it was the Father who *raised up Jesus from the dead*, “We believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead.” The resurrection of Christ is spoken of in different ways in Scripture, but among other declarations it is expressly said to have been wrought by the power of the Father. Well then, we have to thank Him for a living Christ, a risen Christ. It was the Father who breathed the life again into that dead body, and brought our Redeemer back to life. It was the Father who bade the angels roll away the stone from the mouth of the sepulcher when the resurrection morning dawned.

And remember that as these two things, the delivering up of Christ and the raising of Christ from the dead, are ascribed to the Father, so the two fruits that come of them are also of the Father. The first fruit is *the pardon of sin*, “Who was delivered for our offenses.” The second fruit is *justification*, “And was raised again for our justification.” These are both the work of the Father, it is the Father who forgives, and it is the Father who justifies. “It is God that justifieth,” said Paul, when he was carried away with a sort of divine ecstasy. “It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth?”

So then, we cannot truly trust to Jesus apart from the Father. To come back to the point on which I have already spoken to you, to try to drive that nail home, and even to clinch it, we do not look to Jesus apart from the Father, any more than we look to the Father apart from Jesus, this is the true Scriptural faith, “We believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; who was delivered for our offenses, and was raised again for our justification.”

Now, soul, if you would be saved, before all things it is necessary that you should trust your soul in the hands of God, the faithful Creator, beholding always associated with those hands the Lord Jesus Christ, God and man, who has died and risen again to put away your sin. Such a faith now exercised will save you at once, and will save you forever and ever.

II. Now I advance a step farther, and come to the second head, THE FAITH WHICH SAVES THE SOUL CONCERNS ITSELF WITH JESUS CHRIST AS OURS.

Hearken to this, *true faith looks to nothing else that is ours*. When it looks within, this faith sees nothing there worth having and nothing worth trusting to for salvation. Therefore it cries out against its own righteousness, which is of the law, and desires to count it only as filthy rags. It views Jesus Christ, however, as its real treasure.

Do you notice in my text the word “our” three times over? Just mark with a pencil under that little pronoun each time it is mentioned. *True faith receives Jesus Christ as “our” Lord Jesus*. “Jesus *our* Lord,” our Jesus, our Savior, not only *a* Savior, but *our* Savior, and being Lord as well as Savior, we

acknowledge Him as *our* Lord Jesus, we take Him to be our Lord. This is how He Himself puts it, “Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me,” and this we desire to do. This then, is the true, unfeigned faith which saves the soul, the faith which appropriates Jesus as our Savior and as our Lord.

And the next appropriation is that *true faith sees Christ as delivered for “our” sins*. “Who was delivered for our offenses.” That means your offenses and mine, “*our* offenses.” Oh, my dear hearers, it is of little use to believe in Jesus Christ as delivered for the offenses of those who lived in the ages past, we must believe that He was delivered for *our* offenses.

It will not save us to believe that Jesus Christ was delivered for the sins of nations far remote from us, no, but we must believe that He was delivered for *our* offenses. This is the faith that says, “Jesus Christ bore my sins in His own body on the tree.” Grasp you the Savior as your Sin-bearer. “Look unto me,” says He, “and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth.”

Do look unto Him, do look unto Him at this moment, you are saved the moment that you look. Trust Him as your Savior, touch Him, as did the woman of old, it shall suffice you if you can but touch Him by faith, and straightway you shall be saved from all your transgressions, for true faith believes that “He was delivered for *our* offenses.”

And then next, *true saving faith appropriates Christ as raised for “our” justification*. It is a Scriptural doctrine that we are justified through the death of Christ, but you must not leave it merely as a doctrine, you must take it to yourself by faith, and make it an experience, as the text says, “Who was raised again for *our* justification.” For whose justification? For yours, dear friends, and mine, “for our justification.”

I like the word “our” sometimes better than the word “my.” When I get quite alone, I sometimes pray, “My Father in heaven.” Still, I am thankful that the Lord did not so word the model prayer that He gave to His disciples, but that He put it, “*Our* Father”—that is, the Father of you, and me, and all of us who love His dear name, and trust His dear Son.

Yes, Jesus was raised for *my* justification, I praise Him for that glorious fact. I see in front of me every morning when I am washing, that passage, “Who loved me, and gave himself for me,” and I thank the Lord that it is true. But still I like this word “our” in our text, “Who was raised again for *our* justification.” Does “our justification” mean your justification, dear friends, as well as mine? Who will ride with me in the double-seated chariot of this precious pronoun “our,” saying, “He was raised again for our justification”?

Thus have I taught you two lessons, the first, that our faith looks to God the Father in salvation, and secondly, that our faith concerns itself with Christ as ours.

III. Now thirdly, OUR FAITH FOR SALVATION RELIES ON CHRIST’S DEATH AND RESURRECTION, “Who was delivered for our offenses, and was raised again for our justification.”

Observe then, that *a faith which only deals with the historical narrative of Christ’s life will not save you*. If you believe that there was such a person as Jesus Christ, even if you truly believe that He was both God and man, if you believe all that Matthew, and Mark, and Luke, and John wrote, and all the epistles, as well, yet if you believe this only in the sense that they are historically true, you have not yet attained to saving faith, you must go beyond that if you are to possess the faith mentioned in our text.

Note next, that *faith in the beauty of Christ’s life will not save you*. Of late there has risen up a set of infidels of a very superior character to the old-fashioned ones, in some respects. Instead of abusing the Christian religion, they have written lives of Christ, and they have poured out all kinds of laudation upon the wonderful and lovely character of the man Christ Jesus.

Now mark you, I think that Christ does not like their praise any better than He did the blasphemies of those who came before them, because if Jesus of Nazareth was not the Son of God, if He was not really God the Son, He could not have been a good man.

His moral character, though admirable in many respects, would have been spoiled by the fact that He allowed Himself to be worshipped, and that He spoke of Himself in such a way that millions of us believe Him to be truly God, and knowing and foreseeing, as such a man must have done, that this

would be the result of His teaching, He was a gross impostor if He was not very God of very God. Therefore, if you believe Christ's character to be beautiful, if you do not also believe Him to be the Son of God, you are not yet on the right track, you have not the faith of God's elect, you have to go on another road than that if you would come at last to the heaven where He is.

There are some who do not truly believe, although they have *faith in the accuracy of Christ's teaching*. "Yes," they say, "He is a wonderful Teacher and whatever He taught is true," but then they do not practically believe that. It is merely the doctrine that they take, and not the God, the Christ, who gave the doctrine. They simply exercise their brain intellectually, but they do not trust Him with their heart spiritually. They do not trust God who raised Christ from the dead. In fact, after all, they do not build upon the two main foundation stones of saving faith, namely, the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.

I venture also to say that you may have the most orthodox *faith in Christ's Godhead*, and *believe in Jesus as being Lord*, but if that is all you believe, you have not yet obtained salvation. The faith that saves centers in Him, "Who was delivered for our offenses, and was raised again for our justification." If you would be saved, fix your eye upon the sufferings of the Son of God.

*"See, my soul, thy Savior see,
Prostrate in Gethsemane."*

I know that a sight of His life will do you good, it will be an example to you, but you are not bidden to look to that for your salvation. Your eyes are to be fixed upon Him as delivered for your offenses. You are to see Him as accused of sin, though in Him was no sin. You are to see Him as made sin for you, as your Substitute, standing in your place, and suffering in your stead, delivered for your offenses.

If you can see this, then you have your eye fixed upon that which will save you, the Father laying your sin upon the Son, making it to meet upon Him, the Father smiting the Son as if He were not only a sinner, but all the sinners in the world rolled into one, till His Son cries, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" "Who was delivered for our offenses," there lies your only hope.

If you will not have Jesus Christ as your Substitute, dying in your stead, I know of no door of salvation for you, but if you will take Him as God delivers Him, not for your righteousness, but for your sins, to bear for you what you ought to bear, and pay for you what you could never have paid, if you will have Him so, then you have taken Christ in the right way.

But you must also believe in Him as risen from the dead. He did rise from the dead, and He ever lives to make intercession for us, and it is under that aspect that you are to be justified, cleansed by a dying Savior, clothed by a risen Savior, washed from your iniquity by His precious blood, raised into acceptance with the Father by His everlasting life when He rose from the dead, and led captivity captive, and received gifts for men, yea, for the rebellious also.

Behold then, the Jachin and Boaz, the two massive columns that support the temple of our salvation. Between these two great truths, Christ's death for us and Christ's resurrection for us, lies the King's highway to eternal life, and other road to salvation there is none.

IV. So I close with the fourth point, OUR FAITH SHOULD LEARN TO SEE THE DISTINCT RELATION OF EACH WORK OF CHRIST TO ITS END, "Who was delivered for our offenses, and was raised again for our justification." At first, for a poor sinner, it is enough that he trusts Christ, and does no more, but it is for our comfort and edification to learn to distinguish the blessings that flow from certain divine fountains, to look along the various roads of the great King to see what comes this way and what comes that.

First then, dear friends, *our forgiveness comes from the death of Christ*, "Who was delivered for our offenses." There is no pardon of sin apart from Christ being delivered for our offenses. Of late I have heard things that I never dreamed of before, alleged, even by professedly Christian ministers against the

fundamental doctrines of God's Word, and some have even dared to say that the substitution of Christ, His suffering in our stead, was not just.

Then they have added that God forgives sin without any atonement whatever, but if the first be not just, what shall I say of the second? If God continually forgives sin without taking any care of His moral government, if there be nothing done for the vindication of His justice, how shall the Judge of all the earth do right? Then, the very foundations of the universe would be removed, and what would the righteous do?

Depend upon this, whatever modern philosophy may say, "Without shedding of blood there is no remission of sins," that is to say, without an atonement and an atonement consisting of the giving up of a life of infinite value, there is no passing by of human transgression.

But how is it that the death of the Lord Jesus Christ is available for the pardon of sin? I answer, first in part from the majesty of His person. Being God, when He took upon Himself our nature, and became God and man, He had about His complex and adorable person a divinity and majesty utterly indescribable, and for Him to die, was a greater honor to the stern justice of God than for the whole mass of rebellious men to be cast into hell. There was such a vindication of divine justice in Christ being nailed to the tree, that it is not conceivable that anything else could ever have so established the foundations of morality and righteousness.

Oh, sirs, Christ is infinitely better than all of us put together! As the Son of God, and God the Son, He is greater than all the rest of men throughout all ages, and greater than all the holy angels too, and if He must suffer, if He must die, when sin is but imputed to Him and is not really His own, then God is truly just in taking vengeance even on His Only Begotten Son when He stands in the sinner's stead.

The next reason why Christ's death for us was so efficacious is found in the freeness of His own condition. As God, He was not bound to come under the law, indeed it must have seemed inconceivable that He ever could do so. I could not make an atonement for you because whatever I could do for God is already due from me to God. If I give all that I have, I cannot pay my own debt, so I certainly cannot pay yours.

But our Lord Jesus Christ owed nothing to the law of God, it was not possible that He could be personally indebted to it, and therefore, all that He did was, as it were, a surplus which He set to the account of the guilty men whose Substitute He became.

The excellence of His atonement also lay in the absolute perfection of His character. He was the Lamb of God, without blemish and without spot. There is no excess in Him and there is nothing wanting, and such a character as this entitled Him, when He came to suffer, to say that He did not suffer for Himself. The Messiah laid down His life, and was cut off, "but not for Himself," since He was without sin and was under no obligation to the law.

And then again, His headship towards His people put Him in a position in which He could fitly become a sufferer in our stead. Look ye, sirs, the first cause of your fall did not lie in yourselves. Your father Adam sinned long ago, and you fell in him. Do you blame God for that arrangement, and begin to cavil at it? Behold the door of hope there is for you in this fact! Because you fell through one representative, you can be restored by another.

When the angels fell, I suppose that they sinned separately, and that they had no federal head as we had. They transgressed, each individual spirit for himself, and therefore they fell hopelessly and eternally, and none of them can ever be lifted up again.

But our fall, happily for us, was in our covenant head, Adam. There is a solidarity of the race, Adam was the head of it, and when he sinned, we fell in him. Our fall being in that way, it is retrievable by the divine device of another Head coming in, and keeping the law for us, and suffering the penalty of it in our room and place and stead, that thereby we might be restored.

Oh, brothers and sisters, I wish you felt as much joy and delight as I do in this wonderful doctrine of Christ being delivered for our offenses! I go to sleep at night upon it. "Yes," say you, "it makes you sleep." It does and I wake in the morning with it, and it keeps me awake all day with a stern resolve to

serve my Lord and Master while I can, come what may of it. Restful as this truth is to the heart, it is also stimulating to the highest degree. Believe it, and you will find rest unto your soul, and you also will be stirred up to serve your God while yet 'tis called today.

But I find next, we are told that being thus saved from sin by Christ's death, *we are justified by His resurrection*, "Who was raised again for our justification." What does this mean?

I sometimes tell you that Jesus Christ was put in the prison of the grave as a Hostage for us. He had paid our debt, but He must wait in the grave till the certificate that the debt was paid was registered in the court of heaven. That being done for three days and nights—roughly so styled, but very short all of them—down flew the bright messenger from heaven, bearing the writ and warrant that the Hostage must go free, for the debt was paid, and the whole liability was discharged.

Then the stone was rolled away and when the angel had rolled it away, what did he do? He went and sat down upon it. It always seems to me that when the angel sat down there, he seemed to say, "Now, death and hell, roll the stone back if you can," but they could not.

The keepers fled far away, and Jesus Christ Himself came out to newness of life, and now both the sinner and his Substitute are cleared, the captive and the Hostage are both set free, he that owed the debt is cleared by his Substitute, and the Substitute Himself is cleared, for He has paid all that infinite justice could demand, and He has received a clean bill of deliverance. Thus He comes forth out of durance vile, raised from the dead by His Father's hand. That resurrection is your justification.

Now just look at this matter for a minute in another way. Suppose that Jesus Christ had never risen, and I were to tell you that He had made a complete atonement, and died for our sins, but that He was still dead and in that grave, why, if you believed the message, you would always be troubled! You could not feel any confidence in a dead Christ, you would say, "He sees corruption, yet the true Christ was never to see corruption. He is dead, and what can a dead Christ do for us?"

Beloved, the dying Christ has purchased for us our justification, but the risen Christ will see that we get it. The risen Christ has come to bring it to us, and herein we rest.

Oh, that you would all rest in the finished work of Jesus on the cross, which is set forth to you in all its brightness by His rising again from the dead! Put the two parts of our text together, "Who was delivered for our offenses," "and was raised again for our justification." You need them both, trust in them both, trust in the Savior who died upon the cross, and trust in the Christ who rose again, and is now the living Christ, trust in fact, in Christ as He revealed Himself to John in Patmos, "I am he that liveth, and was dead; and behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death." Lord Jesus, as such we trust Thee, as such we trust Thee now, and we are saved!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

ROMANS 3 AND 4:16-25

Romans Chapter 3. Verses 1-2. *What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision? Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God.*

It was a great thing to be a Jew in those old times. When all the rest of the world was in the dark, the Jews had the light, "Unto them were committed the oracles of God."

3. *For what if some did not believe? shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect?*

That is to say, if they did not believe God, did that make Him untrue?

4. *God forbid: yea, let God be true, but every man a liar; as it is written, That thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou are judged.*

Whatever men did under the old law, however faithless they might be, God was true and faithful still.

5-6. *But if our unrighteousness commend the righteousness of God, what shall we say? Is God unrighteous who taketh vengeance? (I speak as a man) God forbid: for then how shall God judge the world?*

Whenever anybody insinuates that God is not just, Paul protests against such an idea. “No,” says he, “he must of necessity be just because He is God, for how could He judge the world if He were unrighteous?”

7-8. *For if the truth of God hath more abounded through my lie unto his glory; why yet am I also judged as a sinner? And not rather, (as we be slanderously reported, and as some affirm that we say,) Let us do evil, that good may come? whose damnation is just.*

No Christian man ever did say, “Let us do evil that good may come.” If anybody else ever does say it, his condemnation is most just. Albeit that God, in infinite wisdom, does cause even the sin of man to illustrate the greatness of His grace, yet that by no means excuses his sin, but leaves it an abominable evil, most hateful in the sight of the thrice-holy JEHOVAH.

9. *What then? are we better than they? No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin;*

Read the earlier chapters of this epistle, chapters that are enough to make the heart sick to read them, and to make the head ache with the memory of them, and when you have read them, you will say that Paul has proved that both Jews and Gentiles are under sin.

10. *As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one:*

Note in the passage we are going to read how Paul rings the changes upon those two words, “all” and “none.” He begins with the word “none.”

11-12. *There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.*

Yet men come and talk to us about the righteous heathen whose virtues they extol, the imaginary good people, for there are none such actually in existence. Here the Lord Himself is speaking, and the Spirit of God is quoting from passages of the Old Testament, which He puts together to describe the character of humanity. How sweeping are all the terms! “There is none righteous, no, not one. There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.”

13-16. *Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: their feet are swift to shed blood: destruction and misery are in their ways:*

How true that last verse is of many today! Their sins are destroying them, the lusts of the flesh destroy the body, drunkenness and such like sins are destructive habits, and they make those who practice them to be miserable, “Destruction and misery are in their ways.” What miserable persons, what miserable families, what miserable countries, are made by indulgence in sin! There is no true happiness without holiness.

17. *And the way of peace have they not known.*

Quietness, happiness, and rest are not known by sinful men. They are not in the way of finding peace.

18. *There is no fear of God before their eyes.*

How true is this terrible accusation, especially of this present age! Men seem to be casting off all fear of God. Anyone who reads human history will, I think, detect that the present condition of society in our country, religiously, is wonderfully like the condition of France before the great Revolution, which brought so much bloodshed with it. Everything seems loosening, and broadening, and tending downwards, and especially “there is no fear of God before their eyes.”

19. *Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.*

Every man by nature tries to open his mouth, and say the best he can for himself, but it is the object of God's law to shut every man's mouth, and when we come to that condition, then there is hope for us. When we have nothing to say for ourselves, then the Lord Jesus will open His mouth for the dumb, and plead for the guilty in the courts of God.

20. *Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin.*

All the law can do is to show us our sin. The law is a mirror, and looking in it you can see your spots, but you cannot wash in a looking glass. If you want to be cleansed from your stains, you must go somewhere else. The object of the law of God is not to cleanse us, but to show us how much cleansing we need, to reveal our disease, not to find a remedy for it.

21-22. *But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe:*

You see, we cannot become righteous by the law. Paul says that there is no one who has ever obtained righteousness in that way. We, on the contrary, have so sinned that we can never become righteous through the law, but there is a new way of righteousness, the way of the righteousness of God, and God's righteousness is much better than the best human righteousness can ever be conceived to be. There is a righteousness which comes to us by faith in Jesus Christ, not by doing, but by believing, a righteousness which is freely bestowed upon all them that believe.

22-24. *For there is no difference: for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:*

I have heard persons ask, "Why do you say, 'free grace'? If it is grace, it must be free." Well, we say, "free grace," because the Scripture says, "freely by His grace," and as the Lord never uses superfluous words, we conceive that we are not guilty of tautology when we say "free grace."

25-26. *Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.*

Not of him who works for salvation, but of him who believes, not of him who merits, but of him who trusts. This is God's way of righteousness, and we are sent to declare it. Oh, that the Spirit of God may be given to make the declaration acceptable to your hearts!

27. *Where is boasting then? It is excluded.*

Shut out, done with.

27. *By what law? of works?*

No, no, the law of works would have allowed us to boast. We would have merited whatever we earned by our own excellence, and we might have gloried in it.

27-31. *Nay: but by the law of faith. Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law. Is he the God of the Jews only? is he not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also: seeing it is one God, which shall justify the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith. Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law.*

Romans Chapter 4. Verse 16. *Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all,—*

Abraham is the father of all who believe, whether they are circumcised or not, and the promises made to him belong to them also.

17-18. *(As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations,) before him whom he believed, even God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were. Who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations; according to that which was spoken, So shall your seed be.*

He was an old man, with a very aged wife, yet the Lord promised that he would be “the father of many nations.” He firmly believed that which was spoken, and in due time it came to pass.

19-21. *And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah’s womb: he staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; and being fully persuaded that what he had promised, he was able also to perform.*

That is the kind of faith we want, the faith that does not inquire how God can perform His promise, but believes that He will do it.

22-23. *And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness. Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him;*

The imputation would be enough for Abraham without any writing, but as it is written, it is for our instruction, and for our comfort.

24-25. *But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; who was delivered for our offenses, and was raised again for our justification.*

May the Lord bless to us our meditation upon this precious portion of His Word!

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—302, 271, 404

Taken from The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit C. H. Spurgeon Collection. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.